It is a curious fact that palm cabbage (palmito) is not utilized by the Serra do Norte Indians. Gabriel Soares [234] made it clear in 1587 that the aborigines of the coast prized the leaf buds of the palm tree: "Stupendous palm cabbages, five or six spans in length and as thick as a man's leg, are extracted from the buds of these palms."

Pineapple wine was a common beverage, for Soares goes on to say: "The nature of this fruit is hot and humid, and it is very harmful to those with open wounds or sores; the same pineapples, when green are good for curing sores, for their juice eats away all the rotten and putrid flesh, and the aborigines know this; in such wise does this fruit eat away, that they use its rind to wipe off the rust from their swords and knives and to remove the stains from the clothes they wash; when ripe, the juice is used by the Indians to make a wine which inebriates them; to this end they pluck the fruit not quite ripe, on account of its being more sour..."

The Indians of the Serra do Norte found our salted food unpleasant. They often refused the plates we set before them, giving us to understand that it was the salty flavor which led them to behave in this manner.

Milk (condensed milk) was also rejected in the beginning; they would make a face and say that it was human milk and therefore repulsive: [235] "Anungú!"

One must know the Indians' gluttony, their insatiable hunger, their continual, unfailing, artless, persistent animus devorandi, fully to comprehend the disgust which led them to such a renunciation.

The children are given to eat of everything; no matter what goes into an Indian's mouth, there is always a crumb for the little one who walks beside him or rests in his arms.

Even the stimulants they use--tobacco, for instance--are shared with the children. More than once I had the opportunity to observe Indians giving cigarettes to children under two. (1)

1. Cf. E. Roquette-Pinto, "A condição da criança entre os indios do Brasil [The Status of the Child Among the Indians of Brazil," Primeiro Congresso Americano da Criança [First American Congress on Childhood] (Tucumán, 1916).